

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 004064

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EAP/RSP/TC, EAP/PA, EAP/PD -
ROBERT PALLADINO
DEPARTMENT PASS AIT/WASHINGTON

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-CHINA-TAIWAN RELATIONS

A) "Armitage's 'Landmine' Remarks and U.S.-China-Taiwan Relations"

The centrist, pro-status quo "China Times" editorialized (12/23):

". However, even though [Deputy Secretary of State Richard] Armitage's remarks seemed unfavorable to Taiwan, the U.S. policy [toward Taiwan] remains basically unchanged. In the meantime, we also noticed that military, economic and trade cooperation between the United States and Taiwan are enhancing; Washington will assign a military officer to work at AIT; and many people are suggesting that both countries sign a free trade agreement.

"As a result, it is natural that Taiwan should not take Armitage's remarks too lightly, but neither should it be seized in fear all the time. As a superpower in the world, the United States' cross-Straits policy is stable and will not be changed all of a sudden.

"Given the prevailing neo-conservatism in the United States, all Taiwan has to do is to strengthen communication with the United States, constantly put itself in Washington's shoes, and not take any 'unexpected' action or be a 'landmine.' In that case, chances will be slim for the United States to tilt toward Beijing."

B) "It Is Difficult to Understand Why the Pan-Blue Camp Is Making a Fuss about [Armitage's] 'Landmine' Remarks and thereby Belittling Taiwan"

The pro-independence "Taiwan Daily" commented in an editorial (12/23):

". But we must point out that the top priority for the re-elected Bush administration's global strategic layout is to build an anti-terrorism front. Washington needs to seek Beijing's cooperation in its anti-terrorism campaign especially when it wants to contain the military expansion of North Korea. As a result, it is a serious matter that deserves Taiwan's close attention as to whether such a development will lead to the United States making more concessions to China with regard to the Taiwan issue.

". We believe that the DPP government should make the best use of those relationships with our American friends in the private sector, which were built when former President Lee Teng-hui was in the office, especially the relations with those retired U.S. congressmen. We should act proactively to seek their support and understanding for Taiwan. More importantly, the Taiwan people should stand up and speak out their voices. They should convey their collective will to the U.S. society through a comprehensive and in-depth publicity campaign. ."

C) "No More Messing Around with [Taiwan's] Foreign Relations"

Journalist Lisa Hsu commented in the centrist, pro-status quo "China Times" (12/23):

". Taiwan and the United States do enjoy similar strategic alliance values, which will not be easily affected by changes in their bilateral relations. But Washington, until now, still believes that President Chen has constantly abused the goodwill of the United States just in order to gain his personal political interests. The United States does not want to be extorted by Taiwan without reason, and it is certainly not a good thing for Taiwan either from the diplomatic or national security perspectives. Taiwan is making things difficult for its good friend, which without doubt, is putting itself into a more dangerous position. .

"Facing the increasingly severe and comprehensive diplomatic attacks launched by Beijing, does Taiwan

have a great strategy plan to address the situation as a whole and make as many friends as possible [in the international community]? In the face of the fact that Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as its overseas missions have gradually lost its combat ability, our foreign policy makers should no longer mess around with Taiwan's foreign relations. It is time for them to ponder on the next step that they should take when it comes to Taiwan's foreign relations - a major defensive front for the island."

D) "Consider KMT's `China Complex'"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" said in an editorial (12/23):

"US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage said in an interview on Tuesday that a declaration of war in defense of Taiwan is a decision that can only be made by Congress. All Armitage's remarks imply is that the US is a country in which the rule of law is practiced - really nothing new. His remark about Taiwan being a landmine was more controversial. What he likely meant is that the Taiwan issue is so thorny that it might lead to friction between the US and China, and could become explosive if not carefully handled. This is hardly new either. If this is not what he meant, hopefully he can clarify his meaning more fully to prevent a misunderstanding.

"The Chinese Nationalist Party's (KMT) immediate reaction to Armitage's remarks was to speak for the US by interpreting them as a warning that the US would be unlikely to commit forces in the event of war. The KMT's behavior is incomprehensible; on the one hand, it says the US will not defend Taiwan, yet on the other, it blocked the military procurement budget that Taiwan needs to defend itself. Such behavior indicates the KMT is deliberately retarding Taiwan's military strength. .

"The worst-case scenario is that the KMT will succeed in unilaterally disarming Taiwan, so that when the massive Chinese military makes its move, the US will face a dilemma as to how to respond militarily. If it mobilizes its forces, the cost is likely to be high; but if it doesn't, it will witness Taiwan being swallowed up by a totalitarian beast. Is this what the US really wants?

"If it isn't, then the US, in formulating its policy to aid the defense of Taiwan, must also consider the KMT's `China complex,' and avoid allowing it to become a weak link in the defense of the Taiwan Strait.

"It is encouraging that military officers will now be posted at the American Institute in Taiwan, and that a security mechanism for the Taiwan Strait has been activated. The US Congress should also amend the Taiwan Relations Act to make it more consistent with the spirit and condition of the times, and block any rash actions by China to annex Taiwan."

E) "U.S. Hesitates to Defend Taiwan"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" said in an editorial (12/23):

". Armitage's statement about Taiwan being a `land mine in Washington's relations with mainland China' have dealt a further blow to the attempt to the `green camp' to pursue Taiwanese independence.

"The U.S., apparently displeased by Chen's independence agenda, now considers his administration an obstacle to building stability in the East Asia area. The U.S. may become so impatient with Taiwan as to withhold continued support, in which case the island's security will be at risk - a possibility that radical independence advocates have persistently chosen to ignore so far.

"But chances are that the ruling DPP, which has Taiwan independence enshrined in its party platform, will push on with its provocative agenda. No wonder a lot of observers now believe that war in the Taiwan Strait is only a matter of time."

PAAL